Fundamentals of Writing
Grades 9-12 Elective

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2008 Curriculum Revision Committee
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Syllabus

This one-semester course is designed for students who want extra help beyond the regular English classroom in developing their writing skills. It provides a skills-based writing foundation including instruction in grammar, mechanics, and punctuation as well as strategies for the development of ideas for writing. The course enables students to write across the curriculum.

A positive, congenial classroom atmosphere is established so that students feel safe to explore and improve their literacy skills. The emphasis of the course is on developing students’ writing skills and promoting students’ growth toward their individual writing goals. Grading is based on individual student growth toward literacy goals and the effort each student makes to achieve his or her goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRAND</th>
<th>EMPHASIS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Read for the purpose of understanding an author’s craft. Analyze and evaluate models of effective writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Write to communicate ideas with an emphasis on writing with a purpose and expository writing. Engage in real world writing. Revise for organization, elaboration, sentence variety, descriptive word choice. Edit for usage and mechanics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Practice active listening in a workshop setting to understand, analyze, evaluate, and respond to the opinions of others.</td>
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## Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing: The student will...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>write to communicate ideas.</td>
<td>• Identify and apply each step of the writing process.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Narrow the focus of the topic for writing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop a coherent thesis statement.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop and organize ideas.</td>
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<td>• Choose appropriate language for the writing purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>refine skills in English</td>
<td>• Identify and apply standard mechanics and usage.</td>
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<td>mechanics and usage.</td>
<td>• Apply rules for varied sentence construction.</td>
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<td>• Apply spelling rules, use correct spelling, and consult spelling</td>
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<td>resources.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Edit for standard mechanics and usage.</td>
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<td>write sentences, paragraphs,</td>
<td>• Support a central idea with relevant details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>and short essays across</td>
<td>• Compose closely related sentences using logical transitions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>content areas.</td>
<td>• Write with a logical sequence.</td>
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<td>• Develop variety in syntax and diction.</td>
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<td>learn and apply the</td>
<td>• Explain the revision process.</td>
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<td>revision process.</td>
<td>• Proofread drafts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Modify drafts for standard mechanics and usage.</td>
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<td>• Modify drafts to improve content and structure.</td>
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<td>• Incorporate feedback from peers and teacher into his or her</td>
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<td></td>
<td>drafts.</td>
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<td>learn how to participate in</td>
<td>• Follow established guidelines for constructive criticism.</td>
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<td>the peer review process.</td>
<td>• Utilize a workshop environment to discuss others’ writings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Critique others’ writings for mechanics, usage, content, and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>use technology to aid and</td>
<td>• Use conventional formatting skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>improve his or her writing.</td>
<td>• Review and practice word processing skills (e.g. spell check,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>grammar check, thesaurus, templates).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use on-line dictionary/thesaurus.</td>
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<td>demonstrate an understanding</td>
<td>• Identify the definition of plagiarism.</td>
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<td>of plagiarism.</td>
<td>• Distinguish between direct quotes, paraphrasing, and summarizing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use a standard format to cite a source.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Explain the consequences of plagiarism.</td>
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WORKSHOP

This course is designed to help students attain individual written communication goals. Some may hope to move from below-level to at-level or even above-level status in literacy; others may come with accelerated literacy skills that they want to improve even further.

Research by Mary Ellen Vogt, conducted in 1989 and 2000, examined the differences between classes designed for students perceived as high performers and those perceived as struggling. High performing students experienced more interactions with other students, more creative lessons, more opportunities for independence, and more personal relationships with the instructor; struggling students experienced more structured and less creative lessons, less content, and less congenial relationships with the instructor. **The aim of this course is to provide the best instructional practices so that all students make desired gains in their target skills; therefore, the teacher should make every effort to provide interactive, creative lessons and opportunities for independence.**

The teacher is responsible for working with the student and, in some cases, with the student’s family to determine what objectives the student should have for the semester. In many situations, the teacher may be able to rely on existing data (standardized test scores, classroom grades, etc.) to help determine areas of weakness to be improved. However, the teacher will need to conduct an initial assessment to set a plan for each student.

In a differentiated classroom, a teacher says something like this to students: “Here’s where we’re headed. That we all learn and grow and work hard in the process is not negotiable. How we reach the destination is. Some of us may move more rapidly than others. Some begin further ahead. Some may succeed better with Plan A, others with Plan B. Sometimes I as a teacher will make some decisions. Sometimes you as students will make them. Often we will make them together. We will always try to make them in ways that help us all achieve the goal of maximum growth” (Tomlinson 111).

Once objectives have been set, the teacher should then **contract** with each student to plan his or her activities for the quarter (see Appendix E). The rest of the activity in the class should proceed in a workshop format.

A workshop is a setting that allows students to learn and practice literacy skills with more independence than is typically seen in a traditional class practice. Their literacy skills for many purposes, making many of their own choices regarding genre, topic, process, form, style, etc. The teacher provides formal instruction through mini-lessons targeted to identified needs.

In the workshop, the teacher’s role is to
- use literature to stimulate student work;
- circulate and assist students in their learning efforts;
- model reading, writing, and oral communication skills;
- use observations of common needs to focus mini-lessons on particular skills;
- hold conferences with students about their progress; and
- provide students with various means of sharing their progress with each other.
In the workshop, the student’s role is to
- learn from mini-lessons and from his or her own practice;
- work individually, with peers, and in small groups;
- participate in conferences with the teacher about his or her progress;
- share feedback with peers, small groups, or the whole class;
- evaluate his or her own progress during the workshop; and
- maintain a folder, portfolio, or log of his or her work.

Essential components of a workshop include the following:
- **a safe place** for students to feel comfortable with their literacy strengths and weaknesses so that they are able to share opinions with each other, can be “wrong” without being teased, and can celebrate growth;
- **a literacy-rich environment** that includes materials and spaces for pursuing growth in literacy skills and student choice in what they read, write, and view.
- **formative and summative literacy assessments**, including teacher observations, student-maintained portfolios, and student self-assessments;
- **time for reading aloud**, including books and non-fiction articles for students to read and use as models for their own writing;
- **time for invested discussions**, which focus on discussing ideas, sharing interpretations, and negotiating meaning from various texts, including books, films, and student writings;
- **explicit instruction** based on identified needs, embedded in **authentic** literacy activities, through **mini-lessons** or **conferences**.

These components are described in detail below.

**A safe place...**

The nature of this course requires that the teacher establish and build a close rapport with students as well as develop trust among the students in the class. The Appendix offers suggestions for use at the beginning of the semester to help the teacher create an environment that promotes student growth in literacy. Teachers may have other similar activities to use at the beginning of the semester and throughout the semester to maintain a supportive classroom environment.

One of the ways to make the Fundamentals of Writing a safe place is for the teacher to model the expected behaviors and allow time for students to practice them. Even behaviors such as getting seated before the bell rings or gathering for a mini lesson on a writing convention should be modeled so that students know what is expected of them in this particular classroom. As teachers model behaviors and actually provide time for students to practice these behaviors, the students will learn what is expected for each part of the workshop and will be able to play their roles appropriately. Eventually, students know how to run the class even if the teacher is not present.
A literacy-rich environment...

The Fundamentals of Writing course provides students with high-interest, high-quality, authentic literacy materials, including (but not limited to):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th>Media</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>young adult novels</td>
<td>Internet access</td>
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<tr>
<td>classic novels</td>
<td>visual arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>comic books/graphic novels</td>
<td>music (CDs, radio)</td>
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<tr>
<td>contemporary fiction</td>
<td>television/film</td>
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<tr>
<th>Nonfiction and Informational Texts</th>
<th>Other literature</th>
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<tr>
<td>magazines</td>
<td>poetry</td>
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<td>newspapers</td>
<td>drama</td>
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<td>biographies</td>
<td>screenplays</td>
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<td>content books</td>
<td>environmental text</td>
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The classroom should be saturated with literacy, providing students with multiple opportunities to read, write, speak, listen, and view.

Student choice is a critical factor of this component. The teacher should NOT make most or even many of the reading selection and writing format decisions for the students; the workshop provides an array of choices which the teacher structures to support the acceleration of students’ literacy skills. However, a focus on expository writing and writing in a variety of content areas should be emphasized. Students may need to be guided to select appropriate reading materials or writing topics and formats. Finding a balance between student choice and teacher-directed assignments is crucial.

The following are examples of modes of writing that may be emphasized in the course. These modes of writing are helpful in providing scaffolding to students as they develop as writers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Writing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Short answer responses</td>
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<td>• Types of sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
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<td>Business Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Letters</td>
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<td>• Resume</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
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<td>• Process Explanation</td>
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<td>• Comparison/Contrast</td>
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<td>• Cause/Effect</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Response to Prompt</td>
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<tr>
<td>• SOL Prompt</td>
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Authenticity is also a key. Students should be encouraged to write for a purpose. Anthologies, basals, and other traditional classroom materials are not as effective as the kinds of texts students are likely to encounter outside of school. The use of real-world materials for discussion and modeling will prove to be helpful in engaging students in their writing.

Formative and summative literacy assessments...
As this course is not standards-driven, the teacher is responsible for assessing each student’s growth from his or her initial skill levels. Assessment in this course should be based on the day-to-day interactions and experiences with the student. Teachers are encouraged to keep logs, portfolios, or other collections of student work and progress to help define grades for each quarter.

Assessment should be clear to students; contracts are recommended as a way for both the student and teacher to identify areas of weakness, set objectives, define tasks to pursue during each semester, and evaluate the student’s progress toward the objectives. Rubrics for writing assignments help students analyze their writing. Rubrics can be created in conjunction with the class as well as tailored to each student’s individual needs.

A portfolio may contain

1. A Creative Cover – to depict the subject area or author
2. A Table of Contents – to display organization
3. Pre-Writing and Pre-Reading Surveys – to assess students’ beliefs about the importance of reading and writing
4. Minimum of five artifacts – to showcase work selected by teachers and students and to show improvement and growth throughout the course
5. Reflections – to reveal student insight
6. Self-Evaluation – to analyze and compare strengths and weaknesses found in writing
7. Goal-Setting – to set short-term and long-term goals
8. Post-Writing and Post-Reading Surveys – to reassess students’ beliefs about the importance of reading and writing and to see if their beliefs have changed

Time for reading aloud...
Reading aloud is not just for elementary students. Almost all people of all ages like having books and other texts read to them. Even better, the research clearly indicates that there are significant benefits when the teacher devotes instructional time to reading aloud to the students.

Reading aloud does the following:
- Creates a community of learners
- Helps students self-select reading materials
- Models the joy of reading and learning from text
- Builds fluency
- Models complexity of thinking required for reading.
When should text be read aloud?

- To emphasize the language of a text
- To introduce challenging texts and new concepts (particularly for other content area readings)
- To grab students’ attention at the beginning of a lesson
- To hook students into a longer text
- To tell an entire story
- To focus on a difficult part of a longer text
- To provide a common forum for discussing a text
- To review material students are learning
- To expose students to new material above their independent reading levels

A read-aloud can also provide a venue in which students can share their written work. The reader should practice the text prior to reading aloud. It is seldom recommended that students be asked to read new text aloud without having time to practice it. This practice time helps the reader build fluency so that listeners can better understand the text.

**Time for invested discussions.**

One of the goals of Fundamentals of Writing is to take students beyond “I liked it” in response to a text, film, or another student’s writing.

Many students who come to this course dread discussions and have perfected the various, and well known, nonverbal behaviors that prevent a teacher from calling on them for an answer. They think, and their experience may confirm, that a discussion consists of a teacher asking questions that have a specific or “correct” answer and then calling on students until someone finally comes up with what the teacher wanted to hear.

In reality, however, most “real” readers and authors do not participate in discussions about books that look anything like that. Instead, the conversation allows the readers to explore their personal reactions to the text and learn from others’ understandings. Discussions of the author’s craft, particularly in a non-fiction piece can aid students in the development of their own expository writing. Taking time to model and “think-aloud” during the discussion of texts, be it professional or student created texts, can help students to understand the thinking process that supports analyzing and critiquing another’s work.

**Explicit instruction.**

The research is clear that the most effective way for students to improve their reading and writing skills is to read and write, read and write, and read and write. However, sometimes struggling students struggle simply because a critical piece of information that would help transform their reading or writing has not been made explicitly clear to them. Therefore, the astute teacher looks for signs of these missing pieces and attempts to intervene to help the students make the connections.
Here’s an example:

Rosa, an ESL student, kept getting lost trying to find her way around. It was never a big problem for Rosa until she started to drive, but then the problem became very obvious. She struggled with reading maps and could not explain to others how to get from point A to point B.

One day Rosa was on her way to an event at another school and was running late because she was lost again. She called the school and explained that she could not find the building. The secretary asked, “What street are you on now?”

“I’m on Maple Avenue,” Rosa answered.

“Okay, just keep going on Maple. If you’re headed in the right direction, you should see a Park Avenue. If you’re going the wrong way, you should cross Prosperity.”

“Well, now I’m on Oak Street.”

“Did you turn?”

“No. I’m just going straight,” Rosa said.

This continued for quite some time until Rosa actually walked into the building. When she walked in, the perceptive secretary who had helped her asked, “When you look at the street signs to find the road you are driving on, where do you look?”

Rosa thought about it and answered, “That’s the sign that hangs over the road when I go under a red light.”

“No!” the secretary said with a light laugh. “That’s the crossroad. If you want to know the road you’re driving on, you have to look right or left at the crossroad and see the sign as you pass it.”

How many people have actually had someone explicitly teach them how to read street signs? Most of us just pick that up as we grow, learning from our parents as we watch them negotiate directions and traffic. But sometimes a student misses a detail like that, and the student might not ever catch on, unless someone explicitly teaches that information or skill.

That is what explicit instruction is all about. Reading, reading, reading, or writing, writing, writing is the first key to improvement in these skills. But – embedded in authentic reading and writing experiences, tailored to the express needs of the individual – explicit instruction can be the most powerful tool a teacher has to accelerate a struggling student’s literacy levels. Indeed, it may be the only way to correct an error, misunderstanding, or gap that is preventing a student from moving forward in his or her skill levels.

There is no one best way to teach a student how to analyze a non-fiction piece, develop a thesis, support ideas with evidence, write with style, or attend to grammatical conventions. Often, instructional techniques have to be matched to the text, the student, and the context. That is the beauty, as well as the frustration, of teaching literacy skills.

Several ideas for explicit instruction are available in the Appendix. The various professional texts provided to the teachers of this course also offer a variety of skills, and teachers often bring some tried and true methods of their own.
**Mini-lessons** are a powerful tool for explicit instruction. Mini-lessons usually last 15 to 30 minutes and can be extended over a series of days as students apply the practice to the literacy projects in which they are currently involved. Teachers can present mini-lessons to small groups or to the entire class, based on needs. Nancie Atwell, in her book *In the Middle* (see Appendix H), makes these points about mini-lessons:

- Mini-lessons are “the ritual that bring us together as a community of writers” (150)
- The topics evolve from what she sees in her students’ writing, as well as from her own experience as a reader and writer (151), and they are “almost never based on commercial materials.” (152)
- They feature actual student writing, or her own writing, as part of the instruction—but always as examples of good, not ineffective, writing (152)
- They are interactive. (153)

The steps for conducting a mini-lesson are:

1. Connect the lesson to previous work the students have done.
2. Explicitly introduce the concept, strategy, or skill.
3. Share examples using books students are reading, or students’ own writing, or the teacher’s own writing
4. Provide opportunities for practice – in small groups and individually.
5. Have students take notes – in notebooks, on butcher paper, etc.
6. Have students apply the lesson to the real writing they are actually doing.

It should be apparent from the above description that mini-lessons are in some ways very much like the traditional ways a teacher instructs a class. The difference is that mini-lessons are focused, brief, grounded in the writing students have already done or in the teacher’s experience as a reader and writer, and applied to the writing they are currently working on.

Here is a **SAMPLE MINI-LESSON**:

The teacher has observed that her students are not varying the kinds of sentences they write, so she wants to present a brief mini-lesson on sentence combining.

THE TEACHER TELLS HER STUDENTS THAT GOOD WRITERS VARY THE LENGTH AND STRUCTURE OF THEIR SENTENCES, AND THAT SHE HAS NOTICED THEY ARE NOT DOING THAT. SHE TELLS THEM THAT THEY ARE GOING TO LEARN ABOUT THE FOUR KINDS OF SENTENCES. THEN SHE PUTS THIS PASSAGE ON THE INTERACTIVE WHITE BOARD. THE TEACHER ALSO PROVIDES COPY FOR THE STUDENTS NOTEBOOKS

Syntax refers to sentence structure, and syntactically there are four kinds of sentences. **Simple sentences** state one simple observation or idea. **Compound sentences** state two or more coordinate ideas, creating the sense that the ideas are of equal value. **Complex sentences** state two or more ideas, but they create the sense that one idea is more important than the others. **Compound-complex sentences** are what the name implies: two or more equal ideas, at least one of which contains subordinate information.
NEXT, SHE TELLS THEM THAT THEY ARE NOW GOING TO LOOK AT EXAMPLES OF EACH KIND OF SENTENCE. THE EXAMPLES ARE DRAWN FROM A RESEARCH PAPER THAT SHE WROTE IN COLLEGE.

**Simple sentence**

Mississippi was one of the last states to do away with segregated schools.

**Compound sentence**

Mississippi was one of the last states to do away with segregated schools, and it did so only under the threat of a federal takeover of the state’s school system.

**Complex sentence**

Mississippi, under the threat of a federal takeover of the state’s school system, was one of the last states to do away with segregated schools.

**Compound-complex sentence**

Mississippi, long known for racial discrimination, was one of the last states to do away with segregated schools, and it did so only under the threat of a federal takeover of the state’s school system.

AFTER REVIEWING THE DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES, AND MAKING SURE THAT EACH STUDENT UNDERSTANDS, SHE ASKS STUDENTS TO EXPLAIN WHY THEY THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THEY USE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SENTENCES IN THEIR WRITING. SHE USES A THINK PAIR SHARE SO THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR IDEAS. SHE EXPLAINS—

“Too many simple sentences create the impression that the writer hasn’t fully considered the relationships among her ideas, and they create a choppy rhythm. Consider this paragraph:’” (SHE USES THE INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD TO SHOW THIS PASSAGE.)

Around nine, my friend came back from work. I asked him how it was. He said he hates it. He wants to move back to America. I asked, ‘what for?’ He handed me a paycheck. I saw him getting paid $15 an hour, but they take about half of it out for taxes. I was insane! I’ve never seen a job take so much money out of a paycheck. I asked him why he didn’t just get a job like that this was the job the government had set him to do until otherwise.

“It’s too broken-up,” SHE EXPLAINS TO THEM. “too choppy, too much like getting paid five dollars in nickels, one at a time. That’s how it sounds, like the writer couldn’t string two thoughts together in one sentence.”

THEN SHE TELLS HER STUDENTS THAT THEY ARE GOING TO PRACTICE AN ACTIVITY CALLED SENTENCE COMBINING. SHE SAYS:

“After you write a first draft, it is possible to go back over your paper and form more sophisticated sentences by the process of sentence combining: joining two or more simple sentences into complex, compound, or compound-complex sentences.”

SHE CHOOSES SEVERAL PASSAGES OF SIMPLE SENTENCES FROM WRITING HER STUDENTS HAVE ALREADY DONE, PUTS THEM ON THE INTERACTIVE WHITE BOARD, AND DEMONSTRATES HOW TO USE CommAS, SEMICOLONS, AND CONJUNCTIONS TO COMBINE THEM. THEN SHE SAYS:

QUESTIONS.
“Select a page of your writing and find 3 places where you could apply sentence combining to form a compound, a complex, and a compound-complex sentence.”

SHE HAS HER STUDENTS PRACTICE THE ACTIVITY, THEN INVITES STUDENTS TO COME TO THE INTERACTIVE WHITE BOARD TO WRITE THEIR ORIGINAL SENTENCES AND THE NEW SENTENCE CREATED BY COMBINING THEM. THE CLASS CONSIDERS WHICH VERSION IS BETTER AND WHY.

SHE CONCLUDES THE MINI-LESSON BY REVIEWING WITH THE STUDENTS WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED AND BY TELLING THEM THAT THE NEXT PIECE OF WRITING THEY BRING TO FINAL DRAFT MUST CONTAIN SOME COMPOUND, COMPLEX, OR COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES.

THEN SHE DIRECTS THEM TO PRACTICE SENTENCE COMBINING IN THEIR CURRENT PIECE OF WRITING. AS THEY WORK INDIVIDUALLY, SHE GOES AROUND THE ROOM, GUIDING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS.

Conferences are another powerful tool for providing students with explicit instruction in problem areas. Teachers can use conferences to keep track of students’ progress on their contracted goals as well as to work on areas of weakness. Conferences may be as short as two minutes or as long as twenty. They can be spontaneous or planned. In any case, the teacher should keep clear notes of when the conference was held and what was accomplished, as conference notes can be very useful in providing feedback to students and parents at the end of the quarter.

Material in the Appendix provides some support for organizing class time to allow for both explicit instruction and workshop.

MANAGING THE WORKSHOP

One key to making the Fundamentals of Writing course function well is to provide routine. The alternating day block schedule can be problematic for some students. Anything the teacher can do to provide structure and routine is welcome.

One method for achieving structure is to post an agenda on the board each day. Another way to provide students with structure is to organize the class into 2-week divisions, having some standard activities on each Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Tuesday, and Thursday – and then starting the next series. For instance, every Monday could be “conference day”; every Thursday could be “portfolio review” day. Thus, the teacher could build a five-day plan that looks something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bell-ringer</td>
<td>Status of the class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read-aloud</td>
<td>Mini-lesson</td>
<td>Read-aloud</td>
<td>Mini-lesson</td>
<td>Read-aloud</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conferences/Reading &amp; Writing Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>New vocabulary units</td>
<td>Literacy Stations</td>
<td>Literacy Stations</td>
<td>Literacy Stations</td>
<td>Vocabulary assessment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A student who understands that this is the regular schedule also knows that missing class on a Wednesday means missing a mini-lesson. With some modeling at the beginning of the year, the
teacher can help students know exactly where to go to pick up the notes on the mini-lesson for each week.
Within the 90-minute block period, the teacher should be sure to schedule ample variety to keep students engaged, but not so much variety that the students become confused or disengaged. Here are a few models for scheduling a single 90-minute period.

**Sample 1**
1. Teacher read-aloud 10 minutes
2. Mini-Lesson 20 minutes
3. Status of the Class (see Appendix C) 10 minutes
4. Workshop 45 minutes
5. Closure 5 minutes

**Sample 2**
1. Bell ringer 10 minutes
2. Workshop 20 minutes
3. Literacy Stations 10 minutes
4. Teacher Read-Aloud 45 minutes
5. Closure 5 minutes

Detailed advice on how to establish and maintain your classroom as a writing workshop can be found in section II of *In the Middle*, by Nancie Atwell (see Appendix H). A sample schedule for the first week of school can be found in Appendix A.
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C  Status-of-the-class weekly record ................................. 17
D  Individual student writing skills record ....................... 18
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Appendix A

Sample First Week Schedule

Day One
1. Place students heterogeneously in groups of three or four. Explain the importance of changing groups daily in order to create an atmosphere of trust.
   On the first day of the new semester, Tracy meets Thomas and Christopher with a smile and a set of playing cards as they saunter into the classroom asking, “Is this writer’s workshop?” and “Do I need to be able to write to be in here?” Earlier in the day, Tracy had arranged the twenty-eight desks in pods of four around the perimeter of the room with each desk in the pod sporting a playing card. Thomas pulls a four of diamonds from the stack, moves about the room to find his desk, and watches to see who will draw the four of hearts, spades, and clubs. These students will be his writing partners for the day (Sipe and Rosewarne 7).
2. Complete Ice Breaker activity. (See http://www.icebreakers.ws/large-group.)
3. Have students complete the writing survey (Appendix B).
4. Discuss students feelings about reading and writing in small groups. Then share with the class.
5. Writing Invitation 1: Tell me a story. It can be completely true, completely made up, or somewhere in between. You decide. You can use a genre of your choice to get your words and the story on the page. This means you can tell your story using poetry, short story, essay, news article, playwriting, screenwriting, etc. Use all of the time that I give you to write. If you do any sketching or outlining, please turn it in with your writing. Do your best (Sipe and Rosewarne 8).
6. Collect and analyze Writing Invitation 1, looking for topics for future minilessons.
7. Distribute and review teacher expectations, classroom procedures and routines, and the specific procedures and routines for Writing Workshop.

Day Two
1. Group students heterogeneously. Refer to number one above.
2. Complete Ice Breaker activity. (See http://www.icebreakers.ws/large-group.)
3. Review procedures and routines of Writing Workshop.
4. First mini-lesson (based on common features of students’ responses to Writing Invitation 1).
5. Mini-conferences / writing time. Meet briefly with individual students as they are immersed in a Writing Workshop assignment involving pre-writing to discover topics and beginning a rough draft. Record observations of what students are doing on the Status-of-the-Class Weekly Record and note title of piece, genre, and what their goals are for the day.
6. End with opportunities for students to read what they have written. Collect writings to determine next class’s mini-lesson.
Day Three

1. Group students heterogeneously. Refer to number one from Day One.
2. Complete Ice Breaker activity. (See http://www.icebreakers.ws/large-group.)
3. Review Expectations and Rules of Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop. (Expectations and Rules for Writing Workshop and Reading Workshop should be reviewed periodically throughout the course of the semester.)
4. Read Aloud. Refer to Short Takes: Brief Encounters with Contemporary Nonfiction by Judith Kitchen.
5. Min-lesson on recurring error students are having difficulty mastering, based on teacher observations/analysis of first two writings. Mini lessons in the first few days might also be about the routines that students will follow in writing workshop. This helps students to understand what they are expected to do. Mini lessons on routines foster independence and allow students to initiate writing projects after they have completed one.
6. Writing time
7. Mini-conference/Status-of-the-Class. Meet briefly with individual students as they are immersed in Writing Workshop. Record observations of what students are doing on the Status of Class and note title of piece, genre, and what their goals are for the day
8. End with read-aloud opportunities.

*Teachers act as role-models; their purpose is to facilitate what good readers and writers do.*
Writing Survey

1. Are you a writer? _______
   (If your answer is YES, answer question 2a. If your answer is NO, answer 2b.)

2. a. How did you learn to write?
   
   b. How do people learn to write?

3. Why do people write? List as many reasons as you can think of.

4. What does someone have to do or know in order to write well?

5. What kinds of writing do you like to write?

6. How do you decide what you’ll write about?

7. What kinds of response help you most as a writer?

8. How often do you write at home?

9. In general, how do you feel about what you write?

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# Status-of-the-Class Weekly Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>
## INDIVIDUAL STUDENT WRITING SKILLS RECORD

**Name:** ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Levels:</th>
<th>Beginning (B)</th>
<th>Developing (D)</th>
<th>Advanced (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The student is able to...</strong></td>
<td>Quarter A</td>
<td>Quarter B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize a writing process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrow and focus a topic of writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a coherent thesis statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop and organize ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support a central idea with relevant details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compose closely related sentences using logical transitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use variety in syntax and diction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose appropriate language for the writing purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify and apply standard mechanics and usage</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit for standard mechanics and usage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply rules for varied sentence construction</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply spelling rules, use correct spelling, consult spelling resources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify areas needing revision in his or her writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporate feedback from peers and the teacher into his or her draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify areas of revision in others' writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use conventional formatting skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Distinguish between direct quotes, paraphrasing, and summarizing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use a standard format (MLA or APA) to cite a source</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# FUNDAMENTALS OF WRITING

## STUDENT CONTRACT

**Name** ________________________________________  **Quarter** ________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurable Student Goals</th>
<th>Methods to Attain Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Will I Demonstrate That I Have Attained My Goals?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Student Signature:** ____________________________________________

**Teacher Observations/Comments:**
**SOL CHECKLIST FOR WRITERS**

_____ I planned my paper before writing.

_____ I revised my paper to be sure that

-_____ The introduction to my paper captures the reader’s attention.
-_____ My central idea is supported with specific information and examples that will interest my reader.
-_____ The content of my paper relates to my central idea.
-_____ My writing is organized in a logical manner.
-_____ My sentences are varied and read smoothly.
-_____ My word choice develops my purpose and tone.
-_____ The conclusion brings my ideas together without restating.

_____ I edited my paper to be sure that

-_____ Correct grammar is used.
-_____ Words are capitalized when appropriate.
-_____ Sentences are structured and punctuated correctly.
-_____ Words are spelled correctly.

_____ I reviewed my paper to make sure that it accurately reflects my intentions.
INTERNET SAFETY

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has directed school districts to develop Internet safety guidelines and procedures for students. Currently, VDOE Computer/Technology Standards 9-12.3, 4, 5 specify technology use behaviors students must practice. These standards have been integrated into the English/Language Arts Information Literacy Framework. The safety and security of our students is our responsibility. As you establish and develop the learning community in your classroom, integrate lessons about internet safety that address personal safety on the Internet, accessing information on the Internet, and activities on the Internet. Please be sure to incorporate the following Guidelines and Resources for Internet Safety in Schools established by the Virginia Department of Education into your instruction.

Personal safety on the Internet.

- Students must understand that people are not always who they say they are. They should never give out personal information without an adult’s permission, especially if it conveys where they can be found at a particular time. They should understand that predators are always present on the Internet.
- Students should recognize the various forms of cyberbullying and know what steps to take if confronted with that behavior.

Information on the Internet.

- Students and their families should discuss how to identify acceptable sites to visit and what to do if an inappropriate site is accessed.
- Students should be informed about various Web advertising techniques and realize that not all sites provide truthful information.

Activities on the Internet.

- Students and their families should discuss acceptable social networking and communication methods and appropriate steps to take when encountering a problem.
- Students should know the potential dangers of e-mailing, gaming, downloading files, and peer-to-peer computing (e.g., viruses, legal issues, harassment, sexual predators, identity theft).

VDOE’s Guidelines and Resources for Internet Safety in Schools (2007)
RESOURCES

**Instructional Texts**


Straus, Jane. *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation*. (one per student)


**Teacher Resources (may be ordered through the English Department Chair)**


Anderson explains how to show students the practicality of grammar and how to teach it in context rather than isolation in a way that students will not only understand but also enjoy. He provides lists, lessons, examples, and everything needed to take this approach and immediately implement it in the classroom.


The second edition of *In the Middle* urges educators to "come out from behind their own big desks" to turn classrooms into workshops where students and teachers create curriculums together. But it also advocates a more activist role for teachers. Atwell writes, "I'm no longer willing to withhold suggestions and directions from my kids when I can help them solve a problem, do something they've never done before, produce stunning writing, and ultimately become more independent of me."


The third edition of *The English Teacher’s Companion* again delivers vital information on the teaching of English, including foundational advice for teaching literature; nurturing reading, writing, and thinking skills; and organizing for success. He has revamped his introductory chapters on literacy learning to include up-to-the-minute thinking from the field, and he has incorporated lists of key standards and helpful suggestions for reaching them. His practical strategies turn recent findings on literacy and gender into well-designed, research-based instruction, and his ideas help you meet the very different needs of AP students by understanding their goals and providing them with appropriate challenges.

Renowned author and educator Kay Burke supplies teachers with a wide range of alternative assessments that can be implemented easily and immediately into their classrooms, takes readers step-by-step in building a conceptual understanding of this approach, and demonstrates practical applications of assessment strategies.


Gallagher offers ideas for daily in-class writing opportunities, activities to help generate high-interest topics, strategies for "attacking" on-demand writing, mini-lessons to guide students through deeper revision, alternatives to peer editing (which he says doesn't work), and suggestions for more effective grading. His lessons are geared to teach students the real-world writing skills they will need not just for success in the English classroom but for the long haul.


*Grammar for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach* gives students the chance to absorb and replicate the grammar used in some of the finest novels, including student favorites and curricular standbys such as John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Fourteen grammatical structures are developed as writing tools in an accessible, understandable, and similar manner through the sentence-composing approach. For each structure students will learn a clear definition of its characteristics and function, practice it through five guided sentence-composing activities, deepen their understanding through an independent creative writing activity, and vary the tools through multiplying and combining them.


Written by Patricia T. O'Connor, an editor at the *New York Times Book Review*, *Woe is I* gives lighthearted, witty instruction on the subject most of us dread in school—grammar. Discussion is brief and concise, and much more engaging than the grammar books you may remember. With chapter titles such as "Woe is I: Therapy for Pronoun Anxiety," "Your Truly: The Possessive and the Possesse Abuse: Words on the Endangered List," "Comma Sutra: The Joy of Punctuation," and "Death Sentence: Do Clichés Deserve to Die?," O'Connor proves that even grammar can make for entertaining reading.

A librarian by night and a London tour guide by day, Roberts deploys an informal style of scholarship to dazzling effect, transforming a cata familiar nursery rhymes into a treasure trove of tantalizingly slippery archaisms, hidden etymological layers, arcane associations, and buried meanings. Having explained how the Victorians sanitized nursery rhymes' traditionally earthy content, Roberts attends to each ditty separately, printing obscure variants and tracing historical refer itish constitutional history to bygone pagan customs. Unlocking the secret meanings of the past, Roberts also finds plenty of refreshingly straightforward modern-day analogies for the nursery rhymes—the chanted taunts of the average British soccer fan illustrate certain rhymes' original tone and purpose. In a fluidly digressive sty ories and confidently asserts his own.


The process of organizing, researching and writing a paper is laid is out in easy-to-understand normal-speak. The chapters on grammar and usage are very user-friendly, and lots of extras (suffixes, parliamentary procedure, periodic table, metric system, the U.S. Constitution, world maps, etc.) make this an extraordinarily popular and useful reference.


The strains on high school writing classrooms are endless: externally imposed curriculum requirements, ever increasing expectations, high-stakes accountability assessments, and looming pressures for studying genres ranging from college-entrance essays to workplace English. Purposeful Writing can help you make sense of these competing demands and create an instructional framework that's flexible enough to help every student in the classroom but strong enough to stand up to the weight of standards and whole-class needs. Writing workshop is that framework.


Composition teachers throughout the English-speaking world have been pushing this book on their students since it was first published in 1957. Co-author White later revised it, and it remains the most compact and lucid handbook we have for matters of basic principles of composition, grammar, word usage and misusage, and writing style.

Drawing on nearly three decades of experience, author Carol Ann Tomlinson describes a way of thinking about teaching and learning that will change all aspects of how you approach students and your classroom. She looks to the latest research on learning, education and change for the theoretical basis of differentiated instruction and why it's so important to today's children. Yet she offers much more than theory, filling the pages with real-life examples of teachers and students using and benefiting from differentiated instruction.


This spirited and wittily instructional little volume, which was a U.K. #1 bestseller, is not a grammar book, Truss insists; like a self-help volume, it "gives you permission to love punctuation." Her approach falls between the descriptive schools of grammar study, but is closer, perhaps, to the latter. (A self-professed "stickler," Truss recommends that anyone putting an apostrophe in a possessive "its"-as in "the dog chewed it's bone"-should be struck by lightning and chopped to bits.) Employing a chatty tone that ranges from pleasant rant to gentle lecture to bemused dismay, Truss dissects common errors that grammar mavens have long deplored (often, as she readily points out, in isolation) and makes elegant arguments for increased attention to punctuation correctness: "without it there is no reliable way of communicating meaning."

**Internet Sites**

Index of Fun Games, Icebreakers, and Group Activities
http://www.icebreakers.ws/large-group

NCTE Grammar Articles
www.ncte.org/collections/grammar

NCTE The Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar
www.ateg.org/grammar/tips.php

Purdue Online Writing Lab
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

Virginia SOL Spring 2001 Released Test (Supplemental Information) End of Course English: Writing
www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/instruction/2001sol/WritingWebversion.pdf

Virginia Department of Education English Standards of Learning
www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/English/home.html